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WAYNE COREY/BANGKOK

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AGRICULTURE AND THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

ANNCR:

OF ALL THE PROBLEMS FACING ASIA, THE ONE OF UTMOST CONTINUING IMPORTANCE IS THE FOOD SUPPLY. WITH A LOOK AT HOW THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK HAS BEEN HELPING ASIAN AGRICULTURE, HERE IS VOA CORRESPONDENT WAYNE COREY IN DJAKARTA.

VOICE:

AS A-D-B PRESIDENT SHIRO INOUE SAID RECENTLY IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE TOKYO NEWSPAPER, MAINICHI, ASIA IS DOMINATED BY AGRARIAN COUNTRIES AND A LARGE MAJORITY OF ASIAN PEOPLE WORK IN AGRICULTURE. THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK BEGAN TO SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE ITS EFFORTS TO ASSIST AGRICULTURE AFTER THE OIL CRISIS, AND PRESIDENT INOUE SAID ADDITIONAL INCREASES ARE PLANNED. IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-FIVE, A-D-B-LOANS FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INCREASED BY EIGHTY-THREE PERCENT OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR TO A LEVEL OF NEARLY TWO HUNDRED FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS. LAST YEAR, AGRICULTURE'S SHARE OF A-D-B FUNDS WAS ABOUT THIRTY-SEVEN PERCENT COMPARED WITH ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-FOUR.

IN MOST OF THE A-D-B MEMBER COUNTRIES AGRICULTURE, INCLUDING FORESTRY, FISHERY AND LIVESTOCK, CONSTITUTE THE LARGEST SINGLE SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT AND ACCOUNT FOR NEARLYY HALF OF THE GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT AND EXPORT EARNINGS. SINCE WORK WAS COMPLETED ON AN ASIAN AGRICULTURAL SURVEY IN NINETEEN SIXTY-EIGHT, THE A-D-B HAD BEEN HEAVILY INVOLVED IN IRRIGATION AND WORLD DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SUCH AS THE GAWARGAN-CHARDARRAH PROJECT IN AFGHANISTAN.

THE OBJECTIVE IS NOT ONLY TO IMPROVE WATER SUPPLY AND IRRIGATION SYSTEMS BUT PROVIDE THE SKILLS NEEDED TO OPERATE THE SYSTEMS -- AGRICULTURAL EXTENTION, MARKETING AND CREDIT SERVICES, TO PREPARE MAPS OF PROJECT AREAS AND TO TRAIN LOCAL STAFF PEOPLE TO TAKE OVER THESE FUNCTIONS.

OTHER A-D-B FINANCED AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS ARE LOCATED IN SRI LANKA, INDONESIA, SOUTH KOREA, LAOS, NEPAL, THE PHILIPPINES AND SOUTH VIETNAM. THE A-D-B HAS BEEN ASSISTING AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BY ALSO GIVING DIRECT GRANTS TO INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE ASIAN VEGETABLE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER AND THE INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE.

WITH THE NEED FOR FERTILIZER IN AGRICULTURE THE BANK HAS SUPPORTED PROJECTS WHICH WILL HELP INCREASE FERTILIZER PRODUCTION IN ASIA. LAST YEAR IT LENT ONE HUNDRED TEN MILLION DOLLARS TOWARD THE TOTAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE COST OF THREE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR MILLION DOLLARS FOR THREE FERTILIZER PROJECTS IN BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA AND PAKISTAN.

THIS ASSISTANCE FOR AGRICULTURE SEEMS TO HAVE WON THE SUPPORT OF MOST MEMBER AND DONOR COUNTRIES WHO ATTENDED THE BANK'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE HERE IN DJAKARTA. IF THE FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE, AGRICULTURE WILL CERTAINLY BE AN AREA OF CONTINUING PRIORITY FOR THE BANK, AS IT TRIES TO HELP ASSURE THE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN ASIA THAT THEY WILL HAVE ENOUGH FOOD TO EAT.

JS/CAK